

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**September 19, 2000
MEETING NO. 00-08**

APPLICATION: HDC00-0171

DATE FILED: August 29, 2000

APPLICANT: Rockville United
Methodist Church/New
Day Pre-School
Joyce Elliott
107 W. Jefferson Street



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: Rockville United Methodist Church / New Day Pre-School leases part of the rear portion of the property at 107 W. Jefferson Street. This area is used for the pre-school playground and is located adjacent to the Rockville United Methodist Church at 110-112 W. Montgomery Avenue. The property is in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:

U-458-90	Office addition. Approved 4/14/93
HD-29-91	Retaining wall for parking lot. Approved 12/17/91
HD-183-87	Construction of building at rear of property. Approved 7/17/90
HD-137-85	Remove dead tree, replace sign. Approved 10/15/85
HD-91-83	Remove dead trees. Approved 5/17/83
U-41-76	Use as law offices. Approved 6/23/76

REQUEST:

The applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to replace an existing fence with either a coated chain link (applicant's first choice) or a vinyl fence (second choice).

Rockville United Methodist Church/ New Day Pre-School leases a portion of the rear yard of the property at 107 West Jefferson Street which is adjacent to the church. This leased area is used as a playground. According to the lease, the church is allowed to erect a fence "upon the conditions that it be attractive in appearance, that it properly constrains the children, and it is approved by the Landlord." At present, the play area is enclosed on the north side by the church addition, on

the west side by a double metal railing and wood picket fencing, and on the other two sides by the picket fence. There is also a small portion of chain link fencing and a chain link gate at the far eastern side.

The applicant wishes to replace all of this fencing, except for the metal railing, with either a coated chain link fence or a vinyl fence. In either case, the fence would be 48 inches high which is within the City's height limitations for a rear yard. The existing fence is 42 to 48 inches high where staff randomly measured it. It would extend 76 feet on the south side, 36 feet on the east side, and 88 feet along the walkway, for a total length of 200 feet. New metal and plastic playground equipment in muted tones is also planned for the playground.



View of existing fence from rear yard of 107 West Jefferson Street



View of preschool playground and fence from church parking lot

View of preschool playground and fence from 107 W. Jefferson Street parking lot

STAFF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends approval of HDC00-0171 for the vinyl fence based on its relatively inconspicuous location on the property, its use as a playground enclosure, and as a more attractive alternative to coated chain link.

- 1. Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

Both Rockville United Methodist Church, located at 110-112 West Montgomery Avenue, and the property at 107 West Jefferson Street are contributing resources to the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. The Cooke Luckett House at 107 West Jefferson Street is used as law offices.

- 2. The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

Existing fences on the two adjoining properties include an original ornamental wrought iron fence that borders the south edge of the lot at 107 West Jefferson Street. A white wooden picket fence partially encloses the old Baptist Cemetery next to the church. Both of these fences are very visible from the right-of-way. Wooden picket and wrought iron fences were popular in the nineteenth century and are recommended by the fence guidelines in "Information for City of Rockville Historic Property Owners" as appropriate to the historic districts.

New Day Pre-School's playground at the far northwest corner of the 107 West Jefferson Street lot is not easily visible from any right-of-way. The playground is at the rear of the deep, treed lot. It is surrounded on other sides by gravel parking lots and the 1982 church addition. The fence is much less prominent than the wrought iron and picket fences that are set close to the right-of way.

- 3. The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

The applicant included photographs of examples of coated chain link fencing with the application. This type of fence is generally not considered appropriate for the historic districts. According to Architectural Design Guidelines for the Exterior Rehabilitation of Buildings in Rockville's Historic Districts, p.74, "Chain link fences, when visible from public spaces, are inappropriate to the character of the Rockville districts unless extensively screened by landscaping such as fast growing, evergreen climbing vines."

The chain link fence proposed by the applicant would be coated and either dark green or black. A dark color would make the fence blend in better with the landscaping and be less noticeable than a typical silver-tone chain link fence would. In addition, a chain link fence currently encloses a rear play yard at 111 West Jefferson Street, next door to 107 West Jefferson, although this fence is almost completely hidden from view from the right-of-way by another fence and a hedge.

The white "Contemporary" fence proposed for the playground has the appearance and form of a picket fence, even though a modern material (vinyl) will be used. It is more attractive than chain link and better imitates existing fences in the district. Staff recommends this choice of fencing material over the chain link alternative for these reasons.

Both the vinyl and the chain link fences would be a safety improvement over the existing wooden picket fence as they would prevent splinters and would not have pointed pickets, sharp edges or nails. The existing fence is breaking apart and splintering, endangering the children. The new fence would replace two different types of fencing that now exist (wood and chain link) with a single fence style to create a more coherent appearance on the site.

According to Guidelines for Historic Property Owners, applications for fences must be evaluated on a case by case basis given the requested location. The area to be enclosed by the fence is approximately 3,000 square feet and is at the rear of the property, partially obscured by trees and not readily visible from the right-of way. The proposed height of 48 inches is tall enough to safely constrain pre-school children, but not obtrusively high.

4. To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicant must comply with requirements for and obtain a fence permit from the City of Rockville before proceeding.